

Getting students involved in creating spaces

The CapitaLand Young Architect Programme mentors them in co-developing sustainable solutions for public and common areas. **BY VIVIEN ANG**

Singapore

A HDB void deck with an imagination corner, a communal kitchen and herb garden – that was the winning piece for this year's CapitaLand Young Architect Programme (CLYAP), which was funded by CapitaLand philanthropic arm, CapitaLand Hope Foundation (CHF).

The programme – supported by People's Association, Community Development Councils (CDCs) and the National University of Singapore (NUS) Department of Architecture – involved the mentoring of 70 secondary school students from low-income families for three months since July 2017.

President & group CEO of CapitaLand Limited and director of CHF Lim Ming Yan said: "CapitaLand has been at the forefront of transforming the built environment through our extensive design, development and master planning capabilities. We are stepping up our efforts in engaging the public to co-develop sustainable solutions for public and common spaces in Singapore. Through CapitaLand Young Architect Programme, we are now involving our children beneficiaries in this journey and we also aim to inspire them to play a role in shaping real estate of the future. We understand the significant effects a well-designed space can have on our overall well-being – be it green parks, open plazas or shaded atriums."

He added that many of CapitaLand properties – such as Plaza Singapura, The Star Vista and Capital Tower – feature spaces such as outdoor plazas and atriums where people can gather and interact and enhance their lifestyles by staging group fitness classes and public performances.

"Through place-making, we have engaged the community to shape and enliven these shared spaces that serve to also enhance their lifestyles. Our office buildings and shopping malls also have more than 500 bicycle lots to support Singapore's move to be car-lite and promote sustainable living."

CapitaLand also works closely with government agencies to create public amenities for the community. For example, it helmed the development of the bus interchange that connects to Bedok Mall and Bedok Residences.

In line with CapitaLand's efforts in engaging the public to co-develop sustainable solutions for the public and common spaces, the CLYAP mentor-



CapitaLand president and group CEO Lim Ming Yan (from left) and South West District Mayor Low Yen Ling with winners of the CLYAP Best Design Award Nur Elyanne Shafiqah and Joey Tan Jiayi from Hua Yi Secondary School.

ship programme centered on participatory design, to understand the spatial needs of users of various community spaces.

Shaping the future

Mr Lim said: "CapitaLand Young Architect Programme was introduced not only with an aim to inspire the younger generation to play a role in shaping real estate of the future, it also sets out to empower the community in rethinking the design and infrastructure of public spaces around the neighbourhood."

Students across the five CDCs participated in the project. The winning group that bagged the Best Design Award, South West CDC Team 2, wanted to give the void deck a different take so as to cater to the needs of

varying demographic groups, while serving as a communal space for bonding.

Low Yen Ling, chairman of Mayors' Committee and Mayor of South West District said: "The CapitaLand Young Architect Programme @ CDC has given our youths an experiential platform to identify and understand the needs of our community, and how they can design spaces to bond and connect residents. The solutions show their newly gained skills of design thinking and architecture, and how they are taking ownership of the community they live in."

CapitaLand's product and design specialists – together with students from NUS's Architecture Design Facilitations course – shared their knowledge of the building industry and the

"Through place-making, we have engaged the community to shape and enliven these shared spaces that serve to also enhance their lifestyles."

Lim Ming Yan, president and group CEO of CapitaLand Limited and director of CapitaLand Hope Foundation

application of design and architectural concepts. Through the programme, the secondary school students were able to get first-hand experience in participatory design and co-creating sustainable solutions for community spaces.

Under the mentorship of CapitaLand staff and NUS students, other winning projects included the Most Innovative Design by North West CDC Team 2, where the students came up with a solution to enhance a pavilion by providing greater accessibility for the public in any weather with multiple entry points, and 180-degree foldable chairs that are friendly to the elderly and wheelchair users.

The South East CDC Team 1 clinched the Best Design Presentation Award where the group proposed a

design with communal features for the void deck and youth centre space. This includes an outdoor lounge and resting area for the community, and a urban garden to foster greater cohesion.

Ho Puay Peng, head of the department of architecture at NUS, said: "Through the CapitaLand Young Architect programme, NUS students are able to contribute to the society by sharing their knowledge and passion in architecture and design. This community service project is a meaningful opportunity for our students to experience the challenges of design facilitation and participatory design. At the same time, this is also a great learning platform for them to gain invaluable insights and best practices from the guidance of CapitaLand, People's Association and CDCs."

Winning solutions

The design ideas from the five teams were unveiled at IMM last Friday at its annual corporate philanthropy event – My Schoolbag – and will be featured till Sunday. The winning solutions by student beneficiaries of CLYAP will also undergo feasibility studies for implementation.

A student from each of the five teams will also be chosen to undergo a special student immersion programme with CapitaLand during the December school holidays.

CapitaLand is making waves beyond Singapore's shores in the topic of participatory design. In May this year, in an international volunteer expedition to Batangas City, the Philippines, CapitaLand hosted students from NUS and helped to build homes for 20 homes for underprivileged families in its first eco-village. A participatory design workshop in a rural village was conducted to better understand the needs of locals. Hence, features such as an organic farm and local water filtering will be built and the homes handed to the families by January 2018.

Keefe Tan, senior executive, Strategic Planning, The Ascott Limited, said: "In helping to build the eco-village and improve the living conditions of the local community, it was important for us to develop a keen understanding of their needs to co-design and construct the eco-village to suit their routines. Working alongside the villagers and seeing them band together, I remember thinking that every member of the family plays a part in building a home."

vivang@sph.com.sg